



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Regulatory Services

Date: March 12, 2002

To: Council Member Joe Biernat, Chair
Public Safety & Regulatory Services Committee
Referral to: Ways & Means Committee

Subject: Explanation of Reasons and Strategies for Reducing Overtime

Recommendation: Receive and File

Previous Directives: February 15, 2002 Council directive that departments with greater than one percent overtime report to their policy committee.

Prepared or Submitted by: Merwyn Larson, Director, Inspections

Approved by: _____
Merwyn Larson, Director, Inspections

John Bergquist, Assistant City Coordinator

John Moir, City Coordinator

Presenters in Committee: Merwyn Larson, Director, Inspections

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)

___ No financial impact or action is within current department budget.
(If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)

___ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Capital Budget

___ Action requires an appropriation increase to the Operating Budget

___ Action provides increased revenue for appropriation increase

___ Action requires use of contingency or reserves

☒ Other financial impact (Explain): *Reduce or eliminate 2002 use of overtime*

___ Request provided to the Budget Office when provided to the Committee Coordinator

Community Impact (use any categories that apply)

Neighborhood Notification

City Goals

Comprehensive Plan

Zoning Code

Other: *reduce level of service***Background/Supporting Information Attached**

The Inspections Division of the Department of Regulatory Services expended a total of \$255,649 in overtime or 2.2% of a \$11,855,560 2001 budget. We experienced high staff vacancies and excessive demands for service due to the booming economy. A business decision was made to authorize only overtime for after hour's workload. Compensatory time was not approved because it would reduce our service level.

The Division is divided into three sections which includes Construction Inspections Services (*overtime = \$161,282*), Housing Inspections Services (*overtime = \$38, 225*), and Development Review Services (*overtime = 55,145*). In addition, Administrative Services for the Division had \$997 in overtime. Finally, the Division expended \$21,047 in overtime expenses related to the Brian Herron investigation.

Constructions Inspection Services (CIS)

The CIS total overtime of approximately \$161,282 breaks down as follows:

Field inspections	\$ 107,689	67%
New Program Dev.	27,582	17%
Clerical Staff	26,011	16%

Reasons for the overtime.

- After hours inspections to avoid business/construction interruptions (some of this overtime was charged to the contractors, and comes back to the Division as revenue and not as an expenditure credit)
- Construction boom caused increased demand for inspections, and associated paper work. Inspectors are carrying 3000 to 5000 open permits at any one time - approximately 3 times the normal backlog.
- Hot real estate market - high numbers of evaluations, reinspections and closings
- Program implementation, process improvements, weekend training and overload work
- Vacancies averaged approximately 6 FTE's for the year - coverage for vacant positions and routine turnover during the hiring/training process.
- The Trades Inspector labor contracts were not settled until late in the year. Recruitment was unsuccessful prior to settlement because the strong economy was hiring every available trade's person.
- Federal documents requests

Strategies for reducing overtime

A waiver request has been approved to continue overtime when inspections are requested after hours and charged back to the permit applicant. We are researching the use of flexible scheduling to cover other after hours essential services. Services will be prioritized. Low priority work will receive longer response times. Additional waivers will be requested to fill remaining vacancies to cover required inspections. We will also utilize comp time in a limited way for prioritized services.

Housing Inspection Services*Reasons for overtime of \$38,225*

- Extra Housing Inspector and clerical staff hours were needed to identify and process housing environmental violations during our peak season starting in March and ending in October.
- Housing staff attended 364 neighborhood meetings; most of these meetings are during evening hours. Participation in housing fairs and educational workshops for rental property owners on weekends and evenings.
- Special Service requests by neighborhoods or Council: In 2001, staff conducted a comprehensive Northside Sweep. This request required additional hours to expedite the inspection and compliance period of environmental violations such as trash, weeds, and tall grass, junk cars etc.
- We are looking at labor contracts to assess that possibility of covering neighborhood meeting with flexible work hours.
- Federal investigation document research.

Strategy of reducing overtime:

- Reduce inspector attendance at neighborhood meetings but maintain neighborhood communication.
- Sometimes neighborhoods request more than one inspector to attend meetings. This year, we will send just one inspector to update the community on inspection activities.
- Have exempt employees attend some of the educational meetings.

Development Review Services*Reasons for overtime of \$55,145*

- Five vacancies in key positions due to new positions, transfers, resignations and retirement resulting in lost productivity and increased overtime for existing staff
- Under filling of key positions required extensive training/supervision due to a lack of experience resulting in less productivity and a greater reliance on overtime
- The impact of the new zoning code and construction boom resulted in increased workload by capturing more projects for review
- Workload increase from approximately 3,500 building permits in 2000 to 5,000 in 2001, a 142% increase
- Workload increase from approximately 180 zoning permits in 1999 to 710 in 2000 (a 294% increase) to 890 in 2001 (a 25% increase over 2000)
- Attendance at night meetings at the request of the City Council and neighborhood groups resulting in use of overtime

- Staffing of Homeowners Night

Strategies to reduce overtime

- Eliminate responsibility for zoning letters to lending institutions or institute a three-week response time.
- Explore policy to prioritize the return of telephone calls in longer than the current standard of 24 hours.
- Withdraw staff from attending Board of Adjustment meetings and leave responsibility with planning staff only.
- Plan Review would review simple plans such as garages for zoning compliance.
- Reduce services in the areas of zoning field enforcement and front counter coverage (9:00 to 2:30 PM)
- Schedule appointments with clients 3 weeks in advance instead of 1 week.
- Public works coordinates preliminary plan review relieving zoning of coordinating function
- Eliminate zoning final sign for site plans if Planning has already approved.